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AUTHOR	Kezar, Adrianna J.
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ABSTRACT

The literature on higher education policy and governance has increased since the late 1980s, possibly in response to campuses' questioning of their traditional missions and processes, and focuses on five main areas: financial issues; assessment; accreditation and standards, especially for new forms of teaching and learning; nondiscrimination policies, particularly against racism and homophobia; and changing faculty roles, productivity, and tenure. Themes embedded within these areas include issues of public trust and accountability and accommodation of new environments and new students. An overview by Morsy and Altbach, "Higher Education in International Perspective: Critical Issues," provides insights for those trying to understand current policy issues at the macro level. The literature on governance, which tends to overlap the literature on policy, contains three common themes: the activism of boards and trustees, restructuring, and participatory governance. Lacking in the literature is research on quality in higher education, diversity as it relates to governance, and the impact of state policy on governance. (Contains 48 references.) (JM)

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Higher Education Trends (1997-1999): Policy and Governance

Adrianna J. Kezar

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Higher Education Trends (1997-1999)
Policy and Governance

by Adrianna J Kezar

The amount of literature on policy and governance has increased since the late 1980s. Perhaps the emphasis on policy and governance reflects the response to the changing environment in which campuses are questioning traditional missions and processes. Several fundamental assumptions about the academic enterprise are being questioned: Are tenure and affirmative action still necessary? Should a faculty member spend so much time on research and, if so, what type of research? And environmental changes are causing institutions to face new situations: Can we maintain traditional institutions with shrinking resources? How can we accredit and maintain "traditional" standards with the advent of new learning processes and environments, such as distance education and prior experience? Can we prove we actually increase students' learning?

Policy

The literature on policy focuses on five main areas:

1. *Financial issues;*
2. *Assessment;*
3. *Accreditation and standards, especially for new forms of teaching and learning;*
4. *Nondiscrimination policies for gays and lesbians, and racism on campus; and*
5. *Changing faculty roles, productivity, and tenure.*

Themes embedded within these areas include issues of public trust and accountability and accommodation of new environments and new students. *Higher Education in International Perspective: Critical Issues* by Zaghloul Morsy and Philip Altbach provides an overview of several policy issues that is instructive for those trying to understand current policy issues at a macro level.

Funding

The policy literature has the strongest emphasis on funding, finance, and cost issues. It is described as a concern, however, minimal research has actually been conducted. The impact of the 1997 federal reauthorization legislation, student financial aid, and changes from federal to state budgeting are major themes (Hart; Lafer; Ruppert). Institutional policy regarding the investment of endowments and cost containment are the two most frequently cited areas for concern and areas needing research (Bowen; Speck). Shrinking endowments are leaving institutions financially vulnerable, and boards are asking administrators to demonstrate how short-term draws on excess endowment funds will strengthen the institution in concrete ways over a specific period (Bowen). Although the literature addresses financial issues to some extent, the accompanying attention from institutions or the research community is not present, and it clearly needs to be a priority for the higher education community.

Assessment

Assessment has been a major aspect of the literature on policy for several years. What is

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disappointing, however, is that, after all these years of concern, few comprehensive (national, statewide, or longitudinal) studies have been conducted on assessment. The majority of the literature continues to focus on arguments for why assessment is necessary or studies at individual institutions. A few research articles are written each year on models for assessment, performance indicators, and the like (Gaither et al.). The National Center for Postsecondary Improvement is examining assessment from state, institutional, and classroom perspectives, which should systematically supplement our current understanding. This study will be an important contribution to higher education policy.

Accreditation and Standards

The third trend is developing policy to adapt to new learning processes. For example, Paul Trowler's article, "Angels in Marble? Accrediting Prior Experiential Learning in Higher Education," describes the struggle to develop a model for how to accredit prior learning, which is becoming increasingly important as more older and nontraditional students enter the system. Another study examines the experiences of Minnesota, Maine, and Colorado concerning the development of postsecondary distance education and the implications of each state's public policy (Epper). The paper concludes that coordination and competition can and must coexist, that careful consideration of the economic and organizational decisions needed is crucial to success, and that states and institutions are responding to new market demands. Due to the rapidly changing environment, the need will continue for research on policy formation.

Nondiscrimination

Policy makers are being confronted with questions about how to devise policy to create diverse and safe campus cultures (Gold). Every issue of *Chronicle of Higher Education* in 1996 contains an article about an incident of racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, or sexism, which are on the rise or at least more visible with the new technology (e-mail provides yet another vehicle for hate). Dorothy Van Soest explores how the background and experience of those making policy significantly affects the development of policy, arguing that submerged conflict between competing ideologies regarding homosexuality can result in the development and implementation of irrational policy. Although there is quite a bit of research in this area, we now need a meta-analysis to shed light on trends in research to inform practice. Also there are many new issues emerging such as dependent coverage for gay and lesbian couples or email harassment that will need to be studied. An upcoming monograph in the ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report series by Sylvia Hurtado on enacting diversity on colleges campuses will help to fill this gap.

Changing Faculty Roles

Faculty roles are being actively debated, quite unusual throughout the history of higher education, which has long left the profession and individual institutions to provide standards for faculty (see also "College Faculty"). Faculty members prioritization of research activities is being questioned with the perceived declining need for pure research. The public is applying pressure on policy makers to examine faculty priorities. The public would prefer that faculty spend more time in the classroom teaching students, more time in public service, and less time with scholarship, and that they be held accountable for how their time is allocated among their responsibilities (Fairweather). Institutional policies, however, still reward pure research and national reputations and discount applied research, teaching, and service (Fairweather). Further, faculty work is not well understood or well represented in the literature; recognizing this gap, NCES commissioned a report, *Integrating Research on Faculty: Seeking New Ways to Communicate about the Academic Life of Faculty*, to try to address this imbalance and to help improve the dialogue about faculty roles and productivity.

States, however, are making policies that relate to faculty roles and productivity while the higher education community is still trying to formulate a decision about appropriate roles, such as AAHE's efforts through the Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards. For example, a report by the Florida State Postsecondary Education Planning Commission being put into

action contains the following principles:

1. Review the definition of research and public service;
2. Rely on more effective measures to assure appropriate emphasis on instruction;
3. Develop and maintain system-level management reports;
4. Identify problems in research and public service funding;
5. Provide guidelines to each university regarding faculty time devoted to research and public service;
6. Consolidate funding requests;
7. Develop a systemwide definition of what constitutes service to the public schools;
8. Develop measures for research and public service;
9. Separate visibility for research and public service; and
10. Work with the state legislature to separate funding for research and public service programs from instructional costs.

State policies should be informed by the higher education literature; although research in this area has proliferated, the question is whether it is being communicated effectively to the policy audience. Translation is the key; as often the authors do not adapt their research for the audience they are addressing.

Other trends
One promising policy trend, described by the state of Maryland, is to link reform in K-12 with efforts to reform higher education, creating a more seamless system, enhancing communication, and potentially improving both learning environments. The plan is designed to end the need for remediation classes for recent high school graduates. More innovative policy changes such as this one could result in greater accountability, increased public confidence in education, and reduced costs through shared resources, collaboration, and less remediation (Chenoweth).

International policy issues in higher education are very similar to those in the United States; European, African, and Canadian institutions note that their major policy concerns are accountability and assessment, funding, and the role of faculty (Conor; Osborne; Skjodt). Two concerns reflected in the international literature are not described in U.S. policy literature-access and patterns of governance, (Casas and Meaghan; McDaniel) which likely reflects this country's greater access to higher education and fairly stable patterns of governance. American higher education historically has not drawn on international perspectives for informing policy. Other countries, such as England and Australia, however, have had more years of experience with assessment, accountability, and autonomy issues for faculty; they may provide examples to learn from.

Governance
The literature on governance, which tends to overlap the literature on policy, contains three common themes:

1. *The activism of boards and trustees,*
2. *Restructuring, and*
3. *Participatory governance.*

The majority of literature on governance remains entrenched in traditional notions of administration in comparison with other disciplines, such as business, management, and sociology, which have expanded their theoretical and conceptual approaches.

Board Activism
The activism of boards and trustees appears to be a result of higher education institutions' unwillingness to question their traditional assumptions and their not addressing serious problems like escalating costs, faculty tenure and productivity, and political correctness (Keohane et al.; Maze et al.). Other examples of issues not addressed by administrators and

faculty and taken on by boards were listed in a recent publication by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. It including cost containment and productivity, affirmative action, student financial aid, governance and privatization, federal tax monies, economic development, federal research, distance learning and technology, the campus climate, and regulation and accountability. The lack of literature on these topics reinforces boards concern and need to be involved. For example, research on and practice in cost containment and productivity are minimal, no meta-analysis of affirmative action exists, research on the impact of privatization is minimal, research on economic development is mostly outdated, the necessity for basic research for future economic development is not well understood, and the research on and models of assessment are somewhat weak. Research on distance learning is based on old and what some have called misguided notions of distance learning (see Sir John Daniels's *The Mega-University*). A final note, boards' activism has not been studied; this growing trend and its impact should be examined.

Restructuring

Campuses have embraced many major changes; this trend is illustrated in the proliferation of literature on restructuring. The most prevalent restructuring efforts are in the areas of assessment and faculty roles (Aguirre and Hawkins; Phipps). Not surprisingly, plans for restructuring increasingly are emerging from boards and trustees. Reengineering is a primary strategy (Sapp; Temares). Phipps describes how governing boards should be involved in a campuswide restructuring process. He describes what the process should entail and asks some fundamental questions about what and how students should learn, equitable faculty teaching loads, the quality and definition of research, and the role of tenure in promoting an institution's mission. He also notes that barriers to organizational change, particularly resistance from the various constituencies, must be anticipated. Some literature addresses restructuring to address financial concerns and to control or decrease tuition in order to respond to concerns about access. Few institutions appear to be sharing ideas about this important area, however. Several studies are beginning to emerge that describe why restructuring or change succeeds or fails (Aguirre and Hawkins; Phipps), and it will continue to be an important area for research.

Participatory Governance

Increasing the involvement of individuals in governance is an ongoing concern in higher education (Weingartner). Of particular concern is faculty participation in the restructuring that affects their lives (Young). Creating participatory governance structures remains a major theme in the higher education literature. For example, a paper by Laurence Marcus and Richard Smith, "Faculty Perceptions of Strategic Visioning," presents a statistical analysis indicating that the number of times a faculty member was involved in the process of governance was positively associated with the extent to which the faculty member thought the process was appropriate. Overall, faculty participation in the developmental stages of planning was found to be an important contributor to its capacity for motivation and faculty's acceptance. An exemplary article by Phyllis Lewis and Sharon McDade describes placing less emphasis on the leadership of one or a few individual administrators and concentrating on creating a culture of leadership that will empower all members of the institution. Although structures of participatory governance are becoming more common and growing in importance, there is still minimal research on this topic.

Another major area in the literature on governance discusses strategies for addressing common presidential concerns, such as how to deal with campus crises (Koplik et al.), interim presidencies and new presidencies (Everley; Guskin), how to foster productive relationships with the board (Ingram), and constraints on presidential leadership (Fisher; Koch). Entire issues of *Educational Record* and *New Directions for Higher Education* (Cox; Gaudiani; Gordon and Gordon; Hahn; McLaughlin; Martin; Risser) are devoted to the stress of the college presidency and coping with it. For example, Rita Bornstein, in "Muffled Voices," describes how concerns about job security reduce college presidents' freedom to participate in public life. An examination of other individuals' roles in

governance and leadership would be useful. The literature on governance seems to involve mostly boards and presidents. Does this coverage really mirror the situation on college campuses? What are the implications of this trend, especially as compared to the research from the quality movement and from business and management suggesting that limiting governance to a few individuals at the top of an organization is not the best approach?

Surprisingly, quality is hardly mentioned in the literature on policy or governance, yet it remains part of the international dialogue on higher education and the literature on administration (Palmer). Another area of concern is the minimal amount of information on diversity related to governance (with cultural diversity defined as differences in position or level within an institution as well as differences in race and gender). Campus governance brings together people from various experiences and backgrounds and is often filled with contentiousness, and this diversity will surely significantly affect higher education institutions. There is no mention in the literature about exploring ways to practice governance more effectively in this increasingly diverse environment with the exception of an article that describes how effective leadership is culturally inclusive and requires a willingness to take risks, cultural self-awareness, the ability to separate individuals from stereotypes, attentive listening, the ability to view cultural differences as an asset, and a willingness to see opposing viewpoints as valid and real (Schmidt).

Another significant gap in the literature is the minimal examination of the role of states in campus governance or the impact of state policy on governance. Given the more active involvement of states in policy making related to financial aid, faculty productivity, and even curriculum, researchers would be expected to explore this issue. One of the few studies conducted found no evidence that management's flexibility and institutional autonomy exert a significant influence on measures of faculty and student quality (Malik; Volkwein).

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